



**SR-710 Tunnel Technical Study  
El Sereno Community Meeting Summary  
March 26, 2009  
Los Angeles Christian Presbyterian Church  
6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Caltrans hosted a public meeting in the community of El Sereno to discuss the SR-710 Tunnel Technical Study. The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for two-way communication to take place between community members and the SR-710 Study Team, which is composed of Caltrans staff, technical consultants and community outreach consultants. The meeting was held at the Los Angeles Christian Presbyterian Church, and approximately 200 community members attended, including their elected representatives, State Assemblymember Kevin de León and Los Angeles City Councilmember Jose Huizar and members of their staff. Study Team members that attended included the following project management staff from Caltrans: Doug Failing, District 7 Director; Abdi Saghafi, Project Manager; Deborah Robertson, Deputy District Director, External Affairs, and Maria Raptis, Public Information Officer. Lynda Bybee, Deputy Executive Officer of Regional Communications Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) was also present. Team members with geotechnical tunnel expertise who participated were Ayman Salama and Yoga Chandran of CH2MHILL; Steve Klein of Jacob Engineering; and Al Wattson of Paladin Professional Consultants. Outreach Team Members in attendance were: Rebecca Barrantes, Enrique Gasca, Glenda Silva of The Sierra Group (TSG); Rena Salcedo and Debbie Rusas of GCAP Services; Katherine Padilla, John Limon, and Thelma Herrera, of Katherine Padilla & Associates.

## **MEETING FORMAT**

The meeting began at 6:30 p.m. with an Open House, during which community members viewed informational displays and participated in one-to-one conversations with Study Team Members. The intent was to provide the opportunity for two-way dialogue to occur in a relaxed, informal environment. They were encouraged to ask questions, hear answers, and express their opinions.

The meeting was then convened at 7 p.m., beginning with welcoming comments from Assemblymember de León, Councilmember Huizar, and Caltrans Director Doug Failing. Each highlighted important messages:

- Community involvement and public input is a significant component of the Study;



- Community members are encouraged to provide their perspectives and values.

Assemblyman de Leon, Councilman Huizar, and District Director Failing each provided their personal assurances that there would be ample opportunities for community members to stay informed throughout the Study, including more community meetings.

Geotechnical experts Steve Klein and Yoga Chandran then provided an informational PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Klein began by describing the study purpose: to consider all practical routes for extending State Route 710 using a tunnel; gather information about soil and subsurface conditions in order to determine geotechnical feasibility; and to provide for community involvement and input. He explained that tunnels can be viewed as a means to resolve transportation challenges, while reducing impacts on communities and other sensitive areas. He then described modern tunnel technology systems, including lighting, ventilation and safety, and the tunnels that currently operate in Madrid, Paris, and Shanghai.

Mr. Yoga Chandran then presented information about the Exploration Program, the research and data collection process that has been underway since January 2009 and will continue through May 2009. The Exploration Program entails conducting borings to collect underground soil and rock samples. Seismic reflection, another research method that is being conducted as part of this Study, was also defined and illustrated through photographs. The geographic zones and sites of the Exploration Program, which includes El Sereno, were explained and illustrated. Additionally, the notification and on-site door-to-door outreach conducted during the program was described.

### **Community Dialogue**

The audience was then invited to ask questions during a Question and Answer session, which was facilitated by Rebecca Barrantes, Project Outreach Manager. Questions ranged from potential environmental impacts, costs of the Study, safety of tunnels, and community representation on the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committees. The following are questions asked, and comments offered from community members. *Answers provided during the meeting by Caltrans Director Doug Failing and Study Team Members are shown in italics.*



## Environmental Concerns

- Will exhaust on all vehicles in the tunnel be assessed during the Environmental Impact Review?  
*Yes, if at the end of the Study, we decide to proceed, a full Environmental Impact Report will be conducted to identify and investigate all potential environmental impacts, including air quality.*
- Ventilation towers at each portal (entry and exit) and in-between were talked about during the previous study. They weren't mentioned when you discussed ventilation systems during the presentation.  
*There have been advancements in technology that may allow the use of efficient gas scrubbers (to clean the air) instead. All will be researched at a later stage, if we decide to go through an environmental impact report. Right now, we are focused on the exploring only on identifying the geotechnical qualities and geological qualities of the area.*
- Are tunnels safe?  
*Through this Geotechnical Study, we can identify the wide range of geology that exists in this area. We can have a better idea and be prepared; there should be no surprises! We can have information that will help avoid unpredictable bad soil conditions. Tunnels in other parts of the world tend to have good track records for safety.*
- What will be the length of the tunnel?  
*For now we are committed to completing this Study. No decision will be made on whether there will be a tunnel until we finish this Study, and then we would still need to conduct an Environmental Impact Report. Possibly, if there were a tunnel, depending on the route, it could be 4-5 miles long.*
- Is underground contamination an issue?  
*There are safeguards in place. The area that we know to be contaminated-- a Superfund site within Zone 5-- we are avoiding.*

## Testing Methodology

- Through Seismic Reflection tests, can geophysical lines (units of same subsurface geological material) be determined by creating vibrations?  
*Yes, sonar-type vibrations reflect back what kinds of materials are underground, beneath the surface.*



- When borings are done, are the holes filled with slurry?  
*Most of the sites are left as monitoring wells. We place a PVC pipe in the hole and fill the bottom up to 100 feet from the top with sand and use bentonite slurry for the remaining depth and then cover the hole.*
- Why were there so many borings in El Sereno, if this is supposed to be a route neutral Study?  
*Zone three contains the most geological variations out of all five zones. El Sereno is at the beginning of Zone 3 where most of these variations are found.*

### **Boring Locations**

- Who selected the boring locations?  
*Selection of testing location was made through a coordinated effort between Caltrans and Geotechnical consultants. We presented recommendations to the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee for this Study for their review and input. Geological complexity drives the number of borings.*

### **Study Questions and Comments**

- How long will it take to analyze the testing results? Will there be another community meeting to let us know the results?
- It is important to keep everyone notified and informed! Caltrans must be held accountable.  
*It will take at least two months to review and analyze the results. There will be another community meeting held, and community members will be notified, as you were for this meeting.*
- How much does this Study cost?  
*The cost is approximately \$5.4 million for the geotechnical studies and \$1 million for outreach.*



## Property Concerns

- How far below surface ground do my property rights extend?  
*Your property rights may be as deep as we are tunneling. We may need to negotiate for subsurface easements below your home, should the decision be made to build a tunnel.*
- I own a business at Alhambra and Lompoc, will my business be impacted?  
*If a decision is made to proceed at the end of the Study, an Environment Impact Report will be conducted. All impacts to privately-owned property will be identified along with mitigation measures. You will be notified should impact to your business become an issue.*
- What will happen to the Caltrans-owned homes? Maybe there can be a Task Force set up to provide input to Caltrans about how they can be sold to developers and others?
- There is a community garden on Caltrans-owned property. What will happen to that?  
*Properties may be sold during the environmental review phase, if that were to occur. It would be a good idea to set up an advisory committee during that phase.*

## Community Outreach and Representation

- Staff did a great job organizing this meeting. On the Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee, is there anyone from El Sereno?  
*All the communities located within the Study area have representatives on the Committees. Yes, there are Council District 14 representatives on both committees.*

### Other Comments

- We don't want your tunnel or your by-ways, highways, etc. We respectfully decline everything.

## NEXT STEPS

Although scheduled to be concluded at 8:30 p.m., the meeting ended at 9 p.m. District Director Failing provided his assurance, once again, that there would be another community meeting to discuss research findings. Ms. Barrantes thanked all participants and promised them the Study Team would keep them informed and engaged.